

**EXETER-WEST GREENWICH
REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT**

September 25, 2012

MINUTES

The form and content of these minutes conform to commonly accepted standards and shall become the official record of the meeting after review and approval by the School Committee. By definition, minutes are not a verbatim record for the proceedings.

The Exeter-West Greenwich Regional School District School Committee held a meeting on this date at 6:00 p.m. in the Jr. – Sr. High School Library. Members Present: Teri Maia-Cicero, Chairperson; Mark Rafanelli, Vice-Chairperson; Valerie Zuercher, Clerk; Theresa Donovan, Paul McFadden, Claudine Pande, Lee Kissinger. Others Present: James Erinakes, II, Superintendent of Schools; Robert Ross, Director of Administration

ORDER –Chair Cicero called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited and Member Pande read the District Mission Statement.

Open Forum – Pat D’Andrea thanked Superintendent Erinakes and the School Committee for looking at everything, making a decision, and once again empowering. She said she appreciated all the efforts of everyone and she is not going to stop in her quest to help everybody.

EWG Boosters Club President Bob Prenda welcomed Superintendent Erinakes once again to the community and congratulated him. On behalf of Boosters, he presented the Superintendent with an Exeter-West Greenwich jacket and said he hopes he will wear it proudly this Saturday to Homecoming 2012. Mr. Prenda gave an overview of the scheduled sporting events, disseminated Homecoming 2012 programs to members and administrators, and said he hoped everyone could attend.

ROUTINE ITEMS – CONSENT AGENDA- Superintendent Erinakes gave an overview of the Consent Agenda.

Superintendent Erinakes and Mr. Ross answered Member Donovan’s inquiry regarding consent agenda item, B. 3. a.

Member McFadden requested to pull the regular meeting minutes of September 11, 2012 from the consent agenda.

Clerk Zuercher moved to accept the consent agenda with the exception of the regular meeting minutes of September 11, 2012; Seconded by Member Donovan. The motion passed unanimously (7-0).

The following items were approved:

- A. Approval of Minutes –Executive Session Minutes of September 11, 2012**
 - B. Personnel Items**
 - 1. Appointments**
 - 2. Leaves of Absence**
 - 3. Resignations – (As Recommended by the Superintendent, with Regret)**
 - a. Letter of Resignation from Kathy Hawley, resigning her position as Webmaster for Lineham School, effective October 1, 2012**
 - b. Letter of Resignation from Artie Tefft, resigning his position as Head Softball Coach at the Jr. High School, effective September 9, 2012**
 - 4. Grievances**
 - 5. Non-Renewals**
 - 6. Recalls**
 - 7. Sabbaticals**
 - C. Bills – In the amount of \$385,794.53; Accruals in the amount of \$284.82**
 - D. Home School Approval**
 - 1. Returning Family – Ages 16, 15, 14, 12, 9**
 - 2. Returning Family – (NEW Student) Age 17**
- End Consent Agenda**

Correspondence – (1) NECAP Science – District Summary for 2010 – 2011 Students and 2011 – 2012 Students

Vice Chair Rafanelli moved to move VI. A. Unfinished Business to this point in time; seconded by Member Donovan. The motion passed unanimously (7-0).

UNFINISHED BUSINESS – Out of District Busing (Monsignor Clarke, Prout) – Mr. Ross gave a follow up report to address the concerns raised at the last School Committee meeting by several parents regarding out of district transportation changes that affect the morning bus routes for the Prout School and Monsignor Clarke School students. As directed by the School Committee, Mr. Ross said he informed RIDE/Statewide Transportation (TransPar Group) of the parents' complaints. Presently, Statewide has proposed adding an additional depot stop at the Exeter Town Hall, with an approximate pick up time of 7:17 a.m. Students would no longer have to ride the bus to EWG High School. These Prout School/Monsignor Clarke mix stops could begin, based on the outcome of this meeting, within a two-day notice.

In response to questions posed by Mr. Ross, TransPar Group confirmed the following:

- Oak Harbor Village and Exeter Town Hall are safe school bus depot locations
- Oak Harbor Village has been approved by the management company and Exeter Town Hall has been approved by the Exeter Town Clerk for use as depot stops
- Prout/Monsignor Clarke buses are in compliance regarding loading and unloading on the proper side of the road
- There is a monitor on the morning bus. There is a monitor on the afternoon bus.
- Self-transporting – Prout School students may arrive to school as early as 7:15 a.m. Monsignor Clarke School students may arrive to school as early as 8:05 a.m.
- The Prout School begins at 8:07 a.m.; Bus arrives to Prout at 8:03 a.m.
- Monsignor Clarke School begins at 8:20 a.m.; Bus arrives to Monsignor Clarke at 8:09 a.m. (Note: the depot stop addition could result in a minor adjustment but would be within time limit)
- TransPar Group recognizes no statutory compliance issues with these routes
- EWG is within state applicable laws for transporting out of district students
- Prout School/Monsignor Clarke bus route(s) are typical compared to any other bus routes as it relates to concern about being dark in the morning or inclement weather
- Eleven other school districts are using group bus stops for out of district transportation

Chair Cicero read the following prepared statement to parent audience members:

At the last meeting, you addressed the committee with several complaints regarding your child's transportation to a private school. Administration and I researched all your issues and complaints. Bob Ross spent a lot of time researching and conferencing with RIDE. Right now, I will address each point and respond to those concerns.

1. Regarding Group Stops:

We have had group stops for students attending our public schools for many years. Our students that attend vocational technical programs and charter schools are transported to the high school, and then transferred to another bus, and then transported to their vocational technology program or charter school in the same manner as we were transporting your students. We have also had group stops for private schools. Group stops is not a new concept. Group stops are also being used by most districts statewide.

2. Regarding the bus monitor:

The bus monitor was absent 1 day.

*AM route 1132 transporting Msgr. Clarke and Prout students has a monitor
PM route 2011 transporting Msgr. Clarke and Prout students has a monitor*

3. You stated that the bus was arriving late to Prout every day:

I personally checked with Prout the day after you appeared before us and was informed that the EWG school bus was NEVER late. I was also informed that homeroom starts at 8:08 a.m. and students are considered late after 8:10 a.m. Last year the bus was arriving at Prout at 7:50 a.m. This year the bus arrives at 8:03 a.m. 8:03 a.m. arrival is plenty of time to walk off the bus and get to their homeroom. Our own in-district students have the same time constraints and even less for some buses. It's important that we teach our children to use their time wisely and not delay by talking with friends ...etc.

4. Oak Harbor referred to as unsafe:

According to RIDE, this is a safe pick up and drop off location.

5. Parents of Students attending private schools not wanting their children on the same bus as students attending our public schools:

The School Committee acts on behalf of all children

6. Parents being late to work:

It's unfortunate that RIDE gave you such late notification regarding your child's school transportation. We recognize this created frustration and disruption. You should have been notified sooner. Unfortunately, there isn't anything we as a school district can do to accommodate your work schedule. Another option could be to drop you child off directly at the school. Prout students can be dropped off as early as 7:15 a.m. and Monsignor Clarke students can be dropped off as early as 8:05 a.m.

7. Add another bus:

The EWG Regional School District is responsible for educating the children of Exeter and West Greenwich under FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act). Under RI General Laws 16-21.1-1, 16-21.1-2 we are required to transport children that reside in Exeter or West Greenwich to private schools within our region, which is Region 4. Region 4: The county of Washington and the towns of Jamestown and West Greenwich. We are in compliance with the law. We are providing transportation to Monsignor Clarke and Prout. In the past, this transportation was door to door service. At this time, due to economic constraints, we do not have the ability to continue doing so. During the budget sessions at the beginning of the year, we had to make difficult choices to balance our budget and continue to provide quality education for our students. We have a greater than 2.2 million dollar short fall. We also have a long list of things we need to do in our district that we can't afford. We are living in challenging economic times. We are faced with difficult financial decisions that affect our students and their future. As we move forward, we are faced with more cuts and more sacrifices. These decisions are not easy ones for anyone on this committee. As an example, last year we had parents

donating paper because we had exhausted our supply and there was no more money in the budget to allow us to buy more. This is our reality here in the public school sector. We do not have an extra \$30,000 to put towards adding another bus to transport your children to Prout and Monsignor Clarke. I also have to add that you are lucky this state has a law that provides transportation to private schools, because this is the only state in the country that does so. You have made a decision to educate your child in the private sector and you have options and choices.

You have heard Bob Ross' update. Statewide Transportation will notify you by the end of the week regarding adding an additional stop. Any further issues regarding Statewide transportation is between the parents and RIDE Statewide Transportation, TransPar. I want to emphasize, ALL out of district transportation is handled by RIDE Statewide Transportation. I know you have all the contact information. Letters should have been sent to all of you by Statewide Transportation.

Chair Cicero said the committee would now move to the next agenda item.

Parents interjected and asked to be recognized and to be given an opportunity to speak. Chair Cicero responded that the committee addressed the parents' concerns. The committee engaged in dialogue with parents at the last meeting and would not engage with audience members again tonight. Chair Cicero advised the committee would move on to the next agenda item.

Pamela Toro interjected and said that she was told that her written request would be on the agenda. She asked if Chair Cicero received her written request that she emailed to her personally. She stated she made a written request that the district provide suitable transportation to her daughter in the morning to Prout in accordance with the general laws of the state of RI as interpreted by the Department of Education.

Chair Cicero interjected. She said this is not a public meeting. She reiterated that she would not engage with the audience. Mrs. Toro insisted that she would like a response to her written request so that she could proceed to the Department of Education. Mrs. Toro maintained that she needed a response on her request. Chair Cicero reiterated that she just now had given the committees' response. The district is in compliance with the law. The district is providing transportation. The committee is denying Mrs. Toro's request. The committee is not having the same dialogue with parents it had last time. Chair Cicero repeated that transportation is between RIDE Statewide Transportation and parents and the committee has made its decision. The committee moved to the next agenda item.

NEW BUSINESS – Approve Senior Class Trip Proposal – Superintendent Erinakes told the committee that Mr. Gardiner is here to give details about the senior class trip proposal. The recommendation is to approve the trip proposal, contingent upon receipt of

a final count on the number of attendees and a list of approved chaperones two weeks prior to the trip.

Senior high school teacher/senior class advisor Steve Gardiner disseminated copies of the trip itinerary and gave a brief overview of his proposal to take members of the class of 2013 to Williamsburg, Virginia. He listed the various fundraising events planned to help reduce the total cost to make the senior-class trip affordable for all seniors.

Clerk Zuercher moved to approve the senior-class trip based on appropriate chaperones; Seconded by Member Donovan. The motion passed unanimously (7-0).

Audience member Pamela Toro interrupted the meeting and asked Chair Cicero if the committee maintains meeting record keeping notes and if video tapes are maintained. Chair Cicero replied yes and requested Mrs. Toro to stop disrupting the meeting.

BCI (Bureau of Criminal Identification) Background Checks Discussion – Member Pande said the committee is interested to know which database the police departments search when an application is submitted to conduct background checks on EWG school volunteers, if the five-year renewal of background checks should be done more frequently, the cost, and if there is that capability at the police stations.

Superintendent Erinakes referenced the information he enclosed to members relating to new legislation requiring background checks for Mentors, which are different from school volunteers, and reported that school volunteer background checks by law do not require fingerprinting. Fingerprinting of school volunteers would be a local school decision. The Attorney General's office does not conduct national background checks on school volunteers. West Greenwich Police Department (WGPS) will do national background checks for school volunteers residing in West Greenwich. WGPS require a form from the district and a \$36.00 check, which the police department is obligated to pay to the FBI. An Exeter resident would have to go to the RI State Police for a national background check. The district mentor coordinator is aware of the new legislation requirement for mentors, which is consistent with district policy requirements imposed on EWG category A school volunteers. Superintendent Erinakes referenced RI General Law(s) 23-17-37 and 11-37-8.1, 11-37-8.3, which define what are disqualifying events in a background check and pointed out that a report does not list events, it only indicates that disqualifying information was or was not found.

Member McFadden expressed concern that employees of the district are required to have a background check only once at initial hire. He proposed the committee should think about discussing that. Vice Chair Rafanelli said that he would not mind having that discussion. Clerk Zuercher expressed concern that the ACLU may take issue with treating a school employee differently and the cost. Member Donovan said her focus had

to do with whether or not a search is broad enough. Member Kissinger expressed concern with violating a person's constitutional rights.

Member Pande said the EWG volunteer BCI process began five years ago and now is a good time to look at improving it. She proposed discussing if it is a burden to put on a school volunteer a \$36 fee and to have to go to the police department to have fingerprinting and a national BCI check. She expressed her view that every five years is too long and said she would like to move to a national background check for volunteers and if there is a financial hardship, to look at that.

Chair Cicero asked if the committee wished to have the policy subcommittee re-visit the background screening policy. A discussion ensued and members shared their comments and views.

Some questions that were raised included:

- Is the School Committee permitted to inquire about offenses that are not classified as disqualifying according to the law?
- What non-disqualifying events could the School Committee elect to set into policy as disqualifying?
- Can the School Committee legally access information relating to non-disqualifying events that the committee might deem as disqualifying for a school volunteer?

Audience Member/PTA President Egidia Vergano proposed asking if the West Greenwich Police Department could conduct national background checks for Exeter residents. A fee requirement of an additional \$5 to \$10 could be imposed.

The committee reached consensus to have Member Pande and Superintendent Erinakes review this matter with Attorney Henneous, to bring this item back to the next meeting agenda with direction for the policy subcommittee, and to add to the next meeting agenda Employee BCI background check discussion.

Approve School Committee Reimbursement Request – Chair Cicero explained that because of the numerous calls she receives in her role as School Committee Chair, she has had to increase her cell phone plan by \$30 per month. In the months of May and June, she incurred more than \$300 in overage charges. Therefore, she increased her plan from 700 minutes to 2,000 minutes. She and Mr. Ross researched the cost of issuing her a school district cell phone, which would be more expensive at a cost \$35.00 per month. Chair Cicero requested reimbursement for the extra \$30 monthly fee and if possible, the approximate \$300 overage charges she incurred.

Clerk Zuercher requested to see documentation of the district plan and a descriptive written request from Chair Cicero before making a decision. Clerk Zuercher said she

believed Chair Cicero exceeded her plan. She would just like the request in writing as backup to justify to taxpayers should questions arise. Chair Cicero agreed to provide written documentation and requested to continue this item to the October 23 meeting agenda because she will be absent from the October 9 meeting.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS – Recycling Discussion – Approve Recycling Dumpsters for Wawaloam and Metcalf Schools – Mr. Ross said that at the last meeting the School Committee agreed the liaisons would contact the towns to see if the towns could pay for two recycling dumpsters for Wawaloam and Metcalf Schools through RI Resource Recovery Corporation (RIRRC) recycling profit sharing program funds. Chair Cicero said she had not yet contacted West Greenwich. Member Donovan said she is waiting to hear back from Exeter. Clerk Zuercher recommended continuing this item until after speaking with the towns. Vice Chair Rafanelli proposed moving to approve this item for now in the event that the towns deny the request. Member Pande respectfully asked why the towns would say yes if the School Committee agreed to pay. Chair Cicero proposed submitting a written request to both Town Councils. Committee members asked EWG Recycling Coordinator Egidia Vergano, and she agreed to compose a draft letter to the towns by Friday. Member Kissinger asked Mrs. Vergano to send him the letter and he would disseminate it to the School Committee for review. Members Donovan and Kissinger will give copies to the Towns. This item will continue to the next meeting agenda.

Policies Review/Adoption – 1401: School Committee’s Public Interactions - Amendment – Chair Cicero advised that Policy 1401 has come back to the committee because it was brought to her attention there are two parts to adopting this policy and every single member has to be present when voting to adopt. There are two votes required, one to approve the policy, and then a roll call to commitment to proper decorum.

Member Kissinger moved to approve policy 1401; seconded by Vice Chair Rafanelli.

Member McFadden stated he is a member of the policy subcommittee and he is not in favor of this policy. He read aloud page 2, paragraph 2, Direct Means to Diminish Persistent Bullying. He voiced his opinion that paragraph 2 is a personal destruction of a person’s standing in the community and he guaranteed that if acted upon, school committee members would be sued as individuals, as a body, and as a district. Under this policy, the committee is proposing to take action in a public meeting on an individual without the due process of the Open Meetings Act. It is difficult enough in a political body that is separated by two towns to perform your jobs and tasks. There are clearly very divisive topics that come before this committee and voices get raised. By this definition, raising one’s voice could be construed as bullying.

Chair Cicero said she thinks that all the issue Member McFadden raised could be non-issues if everyone at the table is respectful and communicates in a respectful manner. This policy is to protect the committee from outbursts. There have been times when it has been very uncomfortable at this table. This is for the protection of *all* committee members. This is a decorum policy and many school committees have decorum policies in place.

Member Donovan said she thinks there is some remedy built into the policy. In terms of if something becomes quarrelsome, you can move the question to the table, which can be really effective in defusing. Member Donovan referenced that segment where it states *would be referred to the Town Council*, and questioned what the genesis of that was because the Town Council is not governing over the School Committee. She said she did not see the correlation of why the council and political parties would be notified. Chair Cicero responded that if that is the consensus of the committee, that section could be removed. Member Kissinger said Member Donovan's comments made sense.

Clerk Zuercher proposed removing the entire Direct Means to Diminish Persistent Bullying segment from the policy. Vice Chair Rafanelli agreed. None of the members voiced opposition with removing the segment. Clerk Zuercher expressed concern and questioned why the committee would do a roll call on this policy when it does not do a roll call on any other policy. Chair Cicero said what was brought to her attention was the committee would do a roll call during its reorganization meeting. This would be acknowledgment to commitment to proper decorum. Members would make the commitment at the time they approve the policy and then again after the election for any new members. She advised that the committee could approve the policy tonight with the elimination of that section if the committee so desires.

Member Kissinger said he could amend his motion if there are no further comments or concerns.

Member Pande pointed out that a comment is included in the Direct Means to Diminish Persistent Bullying segment where a member could *ask that the minutes reflect a full record of any occurrence of inappropriate behavior; such motion may be made at the time of occurrence or at any time later as a motion to amend the minutes*. Member Pande said she thought that section should not be eliminated from the policy. Chair Cicero agreed. Vice Chair Rafanelli proposed to move the comments regarding *full record* to section IX.

Member McFadden voiced his opinion that the policy is an intimidation policy. It tells members what they can and cannot say. Good execution of Roberts' Rules would put this policy at bay. Member Pande said there have been personal attacks on individual members. Members can have a different opinion and be respectful. There may have been only a few incidences but it hurts individuals and it does not contribute to a healthy

discussion. Member McFadden agreed but said there should be mechanisms in place to protect individuals.

Clerk Zuercher proposed, and committee members agreed to remove under Unity for Purpose the word *bullying*; under Model Courteous Behavior 8518: Bullying; to remove every reference to the word bullying; to reword the policy to be less generic and more specific using words like swearing, verbal or physical postures, seven words, hand gestures, personal insults directed at an individual.

Member Kissinger said he would take his motion off the floor. He recommended sending this policy back to the policy subcommittee for refinements.

Member Donovan reverted to Direct Means to Diminish Persistent Bullying – Any member may motion to include in the minutes a full record..., which will be moved to section IX. She expressed concerns with allowing the opportunity to amend the minutes *at any time* once the minutes have been adopted and expressed uncertainty if procedurally it is acceptable to do so. Member Pande said that wording could be taken out. Member Donovan said to *amend the minutes to reflect* would be a tremendous burden on the clerk. At the next meeting, at the time of adoption of the minutes, a member would have to move to add to the minutes to reflect an event, the motion would have to be seconded and then voted on by all. Member McFadden questioned what purpose that would serve since such an action leads for an uncomfortable setting for the committee and events occur on very rare occasions. Chair Cicero said it is not ok at this table. Only specifics would be entered into the record. The purpose of this policy is for the committee to have non-disruptive, respectful, productive meetings. This item will be sent back to the policy subcommittee for revisions and will continue to the next meeting agenda.

Capital Asset Project Housing Aid – Mr. Ross referenced his *Capital Projects for 2013 Housing Aid Reimbursable* report and reminded members that this item is a continuance from the last meeting.

Member McFadden left the meeting from 8:22 to 8:23 p.m.

Mr. Ross reiterated what he reported at the last meeting, that the cost of the Capital Projects submitted to RIDE exceeds the available balance in the Capital Reserve Fund. He reviewed the quotes and information received for emergency generators at the data center and the Jr. – Sr. High School. He answered clarifying questions, reviewed, and provided details concerning the list of 2013 Capital Projects.

Member Kissinger gave a brief Capital Bond Building Committee update.

Chair Cicero left meeting from 8:34 to 8:38 p.m.

The discussion continued and Mr. Ross answered clarifying questions about the locker replacements at Lineham School and carpeting/floors at Wawaloam and the Jr. High School.

Member Donovan left the meeting from 8:42 to 8:47 p.m.

In response to Member McFadden's inquiry, Mr. Ross and Member Pande said an electrical engineer would be coming to report to the School Committee the benefits of having a backup generator at the high school and what happens if a power outage occurs. Vice Chair Rafanelli requested to also have Director of Maintenance Bill Plumley in attendance to explain the process. Chair Cicero said she would not be at the next meeting and requested to postpone the generator discussion to the second meeting in October. Member Donovan questioned if West Greenwich has a declared emergency shelter. Chair Cicero said she needed to contact the West Greenwich Emergency Management Director to obtain more information. She believes that Metcalf School is a shelter for West Greenwich as well as Exeter. Member Donovan suggested that if that is the case perhaps the town could share in the cost of a generator. Chair Cicero said she needed to contact the West Greenwich Emergency Management Director about a possible grant. Member Donovan proposed that the district's grant writer consultant Mr. Proudfoot could help. Superintendent Erinakes said the Metcalf School generator was funded through a grant. Member McFadden said that that \$10,000 appropriation turned to \$50,000 for the town of Exeter.

Technology Update – None

Capital Project Update – None

Reports/Comments – Chair Cicero reverted to the regular meeting minutes of September 11, 2012 pulled from the consent agenda by Member McFadden.

Member McFadden moved to accept the minutes as stated; Seconded by Member Pande. The motion passed unanimously (7-0).

The following consent agenda item was approved:

A. Approval of Minutes – Regular Meeting Minutes of September 11, 2012

Chair Cicero returned to agenda item, **Technology Update** – Superintendent Erinakes reported a preliminary meeting took place with the service provider through RIDE for the one-on-one devices for students regarding cost, and our current standing and needs. Presently EWG does not have the technology necessary to implement the new state assessment test coming in two years. A follow up meeting is scheduled for October 3 or 4. Superintendent Erinakes said that the service provider services might include doing an

analysis of our technology skill set needs. The pricing agreement with RIDE also includes comprehensive staff training, support with the development of a district technology plan, deployment services, and ongoing technical support.

Important Dates and Meetings – Tuesday, October 9, 2012 – School Committee Meeting; Tuesday, October 23, 2012 – School Committee Meeting; Thursday, October 25, 2012 – Negotiations Meeting @ 5:PM; Thursday, November 1, 2012 – Negotiations Meeting @5:PM; Tuesday, November 13, 2012 – School Committee Meeting; Tuesday, November 27, 2012 – School Committee Meeting

EXECUTIVE SESSION – RIGL 42-46-4 and RIGL 42-46-5 – None

Adjournment – Clerk Zuercher moved to adjourn; seconded by Member Pande. The motion passed unanimously (7-0). Meeting adjourned at 8:59 p.m.

ROBIN CERIO
CLERK